



MID-COUNTY CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD

March 15, 2011

The Honorable Valerie Ervin
President, Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear President Ervin:

On behalf of the Mid-County Citizens Advisory Board (MCCAB), I am writing to thank the Council and the Montgomery County Planning Board for moving forward with the process of renovating the Kemp Mill Urban Park. I reiterate the MCCAB's support for expediting the renovation of this park, which is a vital resource for the Kemp Mill neighborhood. Unfortunately, the park has significantly deteriorated since its construction in the 1960s. At a public meeting on January 12, 2011, consultants engaged by the Planning Board presented a recommended design concept for a park renovation to the Kemp Mill community. This design was based on input received from residents at two prior public meetings in 2009. Residents generally praised the recommended design but also offered substantive comments. The new design is meant to accomplish several goals, among them:

- Retain an open water feature in the park while discouraging geese from inhabiting the park,
- Expand the playground,
- Provide a continuous walkway through the park,
- Provide a lawn area outside the playground, and
- Provide a balanced program to serve all users.

We support the general direction of the design but would like to offer some technical comments:

- Although the playground area would be expanded from its current size, we are concerned that it will still be insufficient for the large number of families and children who use it. We urge the Planning Board to consider a larger expansion of the playground
- We recommend that the Planning Board develop a plan to maintain the pond's filter mechanism that will filter leaves, twigs, and aquatic vegetation.
- We recommend that the Planning Board develop a maintenance plan for cleaning the large quantity of trash that accumulates in the park on a regular basis; we are concerned that this trash could clog the water filters.

- We recommend that the Planning Board examine the environmental and health implications of using a recycled rubber surface for the playground in the renovated park. The MCCAB has previously expressed concern about the installation of artificial turf fields that include material from old rubber tires (see attached letter).

At the public meeting, Planning Board staff indicated that it would likely take between two and six years to complete the park renovation. Because of this lengthy timeframe, we urge the Planning Board to work with Montgomery County Government to improve the maintenance of the park until the renovation begins. Given the Planning Board's limited resources, staff could organize periodic community clean-up events to help maintain the park.

According to the Planning Board's website, the renovation design is currently being refined and will be presented to the Planning Board for approval in the summer or fall of 2011. We request that the Council communicate to the Planning Board our technical comments on the design and our support for moving forward with the renovation. Further, we encourage the Council to include funding for the park's renovation in the next Capital Improvements Program budget so that the renovation can begin as soon as possible.

The MCCAB has supported the renovation of the Kemp Mill Urban Park for several years (see attachments). We look forward to working with the Council on this issue. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to share our views on the importance of renovating this park.

Sincerely,



L. Blaine Charak
Chair

Attachments

cc: Isiah Leggett, Montgomery County Executive
Françoise Carrier, Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board
Mary Bradford, Director, Department of Parks



MID-COUNTY CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD

November 2, 2010

The Honorable Nancy Floreen
President, Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear President Floreen:

On behalf of the Mid-County Citizens Advisory Board (MCCAB), I am writing to express the MCCAB's support for expediting the renovation of the Kemp Mill Urban Park. This park is a vital resource for the Kemp Mill neighborhood, yet it has significantly deteriorated since its construction in the 1960s. As recently described in the attached Wheaton Gazette article, the large concrete pond that covers much of the park has substantial drainage problems that lead to stagnant water, the accumulation of garbage and sediment, and periodic flooding (*Residents want makeover for Kemp Mill Park pond*, September 29). In addition, the park has other infrastructure problems such as cracked concrete walkways and entrances that are not accessible to people with disabilities.

We are pleased that the Montgomery County Planning Board has initiated a planning process to renovate the park, which included two community meetings with Kemp Mill residents in 2009. At the last public meeting in October 2009, Planning Board staff and contractors solicited input on three design concepts from residents and informed them that a single design would be proposed to the Planning Board in the spring of 2010. However, the renovation planning process has been delayed for reasons that have not been publicly communicated. According to the Board's website, a third community meeting was scheduled for the summer of 2010, but this meeting has not yet occurred. The website also notes that the Board will meet to approve the facility plan in the winter of 2010/2011.

We request that the Council communicate to the Planning Board our support for moving forward with the renovation design process without further delay. Further, we encourage the Council to include funding for the park's renovation in the next Capital Improvements Program budget.

The Honorable Nancy Floreen
President, Montgomery County Council
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The MCCAB has supported the renovation of the Kemp Mill Urban Park for several years (see attachments). We look forward to working with the Council on this issue. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to share our views on the importance of renovating this park.

Sincerely,



L. Blaine Charak
Chair

Attachments

cc: Isiah Leggett, Montgomery County Executive
Françoise Carrier, Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board



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Wednesday, Sept. 29, 2010

Residents want makeover for Kemp Mill Park pond

Kemp Mill residents want pond cleaned, and park officials have a plan

by Jeanette Der Bedrosian | Staff Writer



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A swampy smell greets the residents of a Kemp Mill neighborhood as they walk to and from synagogue, cutting through the park at Arcola Avenue and Lamberton Drive.

The culprit, everyone agrees, is the pond that covers about a fourth of the park. The drainage pipes are too small and are easily clogged, the stagnant water attracts geese that leave droppings in the murky water, and heavy rains often cause the pond to overflow, park officials said. There will continue to be some difficulties with pond maintenance, park project manager CJ Lilly said, but there will be at least some form of relief for the pond's visitors in the near future.

Park officials know Kemp Mill Park needs a makeover and have both a short- and long-term plan to renovate the park. Meanwhile, nearby residents complain openly about the pungent odor and otherwise decaying features of the park.

"It's never drained very well," said Ariel Winter, a resident of the Kemp Mill community. "Sediment and algae and goose droppings and garbage just build up."

"We like the water, but if it's clean," said Dina Soriano, who visited the park last week while watching a few neighborhood children. "It's always dirty. ... Keep the cement clean, or get rid of it, but take care of this park."

These complaints aren't falling on deaf ears, but budget cuts make it impossible to clean the park as often as officials might like.

"Urban parks in general, just the nature of them — where they're located, the amount of foot traffic — trash is a big issue there," said Ken Ferrari, senior park manager for the Wheaton region. "And with our dwindling resources due to budget cuts, we just don't get out there as often as we like."



Greg Dohler/The Gazette

A goose drinks from shallow water as ducks walk along the dry bottom of the mostly drained pond Friday at Kemp Mill Urban Park. The artificial pond is undergoing a cleaning because of excessive bird droppings and trash.

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Beyond finances, the pond overflows every time there's a heavy rain. Many of the clogged pipes connected to the pond need replacement but are underneath the private parking lot of the shopping center directly behind the park, Lilly said. Park officials have to request permission to access these pipes from the center's management. As a result, they often pump out the excess water straight from the pond rather than getting to the root of the issue, according to Lilly.

With that in mind, park officials have developed a set of plans. There will be some immediate fixes, and plans are being drawn up for the future for more drastic changes to the park, though those have not yet been funded.

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What can be done now?

Over the next couple of weeks, Kemp Mill residents will see a few changes within their beloved park. First, park officials requested permission from the shopping center's owner to access the pipes under their land. While they can't replace the old pipes, they do plan on unclogging the 18-inch-wide pipe, which Lilly estimates has more than 100 feet crammed with twigs, leaves, droppings and other gunk.

This part of the plan is already proving difficult, however. The management company of the shopping center poured a new concrete pad for the dumpster area of the parking lot last week, so contractors have to wait until later this week to break ground on the repairs.

Other quick fixes that will help rid the pond of its putrid properties are the addition of storm-water grates in the pond to stop debris from getting in the pipe in the first place, replacing a retaining wall dating back to the 1960s that was damaged by overflowing water from the pond and getting the pond completely cleaned out for the first time in almost five years.

Maintenance crews started draining the pond last week, Lilly said. Normally, crews don't go in and clean out the pond, like they would a fountain. But the severe thunderstorms this summer meant crews had to go in and pump out the extra water more often than usual, exposing the "filth and debris" at the bottom, he said.

"Unfortunately, the Kemp Mill Jewish community had Jewish holidays that coincided with the stinky smell," Lilly said. "This launched a listserv blitz from that community seeking immediate action."

Possible long-term fix

Lilly said the cleanup and other quick fixes should bring some immediate relief to people who frequent the park, but it doesn't deal with the persisting issues of old pipes and flocks of geese calling the pond home.

The park received funding in the Capital Improvements Program for designers to come up with a new look for the park that might better serve the community. A meeting is being planned for this fall to present a plan that's as unappealing as possible — to geese, not people, of course.

"We're downsizing the pond. We're making this pond as uninviting to geese as possible. We're making it uninviting by shrinking the size down, and instead of having a flat body of water, we're going to keep it moving."

Causing the movement would be pumps and filters, which will also help keep the pond cleaner, Lilly said.

This plan is in no way definitive, Lilly emphasized, but he expects it will be presented to the community as something that could be funded within the next five years.

jderbedrosian@gazette.net

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MID-COUNTY CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD

June 17, 2010

The Honorable Isiah Leggett
Montgomery County Executive
101 Monroe Street
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Ms. Mary Bradford, Director
Montgomery County Department of Parks
9500 Brunett Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20901

Dear Mr. Leggett and Ms. Bradford:

I am writing on behalf of the Mid-County Citizens Advisory Board (MCCAB) to express our concerns about the proposed use of artificial turf fields by Montgomery County Public Schools and the Montgomery County Department of Parks. At its April 20, 2010 meeting, we heard from members of the community about their concerns about the proposed installation of artificial turf football fields at Wheaton High School, other public schools, and parks. Among the concerns expressed were negative impacts on the environment, student health, and County finances.

I asked the MCCAB's Quality of Life Committee to examine these issues. Based on these deliberations, and a final discussion at our June 15th meeting, the MCCAB recommends the following actions be taken:

The Montgomery County Government (MCG) should place a moratorium on further construction of artificial turf fields in parks, schools and recreational areas until the environmental, health and financial impacts of these fields are better understood.

Although research on the environmental impacts of artificial turf fields is limited, there appears to be reason for concern. Artificial turf fields being installed in Montgomery County include the use of old tires. A single field installation includes the depositing of 120 tons of pulverized automobile tires and hundreds of tons of rock on County land. As a result phthalates and other harmful materials may be contaminating the ground and water. Additional concerns have been raised in the sports medicine community with high air temperatures on artificial turf fields. Again, research appears to be inconclusive, but the lack of conclusive research bolsters the need for caution before exposing young athletes and others to potential risk.

As you are well aware the County is facing unprecedented fiscal challenges. Although apparent savings on field maintenance may make artificial turf fields an attractive option, we urge the County to exercise caution. A review of literature indicates that the environmental and public health impacts of artificial turf fields are poorly understood, with many questions left unanswered. With such questions unanswered, it would seem difficult to determine exactly what future financial commitments the County is making with further artificial turf field construction.

Mid-County Regional Services Center

Honorable Isiah Leggett
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A moratorium on construction would allow the County more time to deliberate and allow time for the science to "catch up". Therefore the MCCAB urges a moratorium on further artificial turf field construction on all MCG owned properties.

As always, thank you for your consideration and continued leadership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sheldon Fishman".

Sheldon Fishman
Chair

cc: Montgomery County Council
Gabriel Albornoz, Department of Recreation



MID-COUNTY CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD

January 13, 2005

Derick Berlage, Chairman
Montgomery County Planning Board
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Dear Chairman Berlage:

On behalf of the Mid-County Citizens Advisory Board I would like to strongly encourage the Board's consideration of expediting the renovations to Kemp Mill Urban Park. As you are well aware this park at one time won awards for its design as an urban oasis. Over the years maintenance of this park has disintegrated and the condition of the park has become an eyesore and a hazard to the community.

I have witnessed for myself the playground equipment in disrepair, the packs of vermin swimming in the pond in daylight hours, the fencing placed across the end of the steps leading to the parking lot of the shopping center in response to complaints about silt from the park running into the parking lot – making it impossible for people to push strollers and carriages into the shopping center from the park. Rather than being an area for the community to enjoy it has become a blemish for the neighborhood.

It is the Board's understanding that facility planning funding for this park is not scheduled until FY10. We strongly urge the Planning Board to seriously consider the disrepair of this former award-winning park and expedite the facility planning of the Kemp Mill Urban Park as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Alec J. Stone
Chair

cc: Douglas Duncan, County Executive
Members, Montgomery County Council

Mid-County Regional Services Center

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